

Inclusion Fairy Flitter-Flutter

Welcome to Holland? What the Hell. Let's Go to Italy ANYWAY!

Emily P. Kingsley writes a nice little story about her experience of raising a child with a disability in order to help those who have not shared the unique experience understand it and to imagine how it would feel. It goes like this...

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip—to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting. After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland." "Holland???" you say. "What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy".

But there has been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay. The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a DIFFERENT place. It's slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around...and you begin to notice that Holland has tulips and windmills and even Rembrandts. But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy...and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned." And the pain of that will never, ever, ever ever go away...because the loss of that dream is a very, very significant loss.

But, if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland. Aw! What a nice story...it may strike a chord in your heart, give you a lump in your throat, or slap you in the face. But, I challenge you to sing on the street corners of tulip-land or do whatever you must, then pack up your wooden shoes and hop the first train to Bella Italia anyway! Keep in touch with Holland, (word has it that it's a great source for drugs) just don't live there!

Your whole family can experience Italy...maybe with some accommodations and modifications. Instead of existing in a different place, experience the same place as everyone else...in a different way if necessary! Accommodations and modifications and supports and services in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent possible means you can get what you need to succeed! In Italy. In Regular Education. Why should you be exiled to Holland? Segregated in special ed? Let' explore some parallelisms and discover how easy it is to go to Italy and see that we are all more alike than different.

Sicily = R-Hall/Special Ed Wing/Segregated Campus... Italy is shaped like a boot. Italians are notorious for excluding Sicilians because they are not really a part of the Italian community. Don't let the regular part of Italy give your kid the boot and stick him in Sicily. (Studies show that children who are not included in school are not included in the community.)

Untapped Excellence

Your child could be the next DaVinci waiting to happen. What's your aspiration. What's his? Surely not to turn the crank in a sheltered windmill...

Tantrums and Waving Hands

Does your kid communicate non-traditionally? Cool! Your kid will fit right in because everyone knows Italians talk with their hands, and lots of people communicate in more than just one way. Does your kid have a behavior disorder? Not to worry...Italians are passionate people and sometimes tempers flare. (Typical kids lose it, too. Only, their behavior isn't tracked, monitored under a magnifying glass, and given mastery criteria!)

Feeding Issues

Does your child only eat pizza? Mine does. No problem in Italy.

Mobility Differences

Does your child walk crooked? Different is cool...like the leaning tower of Piza. Legs work differently? Everyone takes gondola boats in Venice in lieu of walking. Need special shoes for your kid? What better place to be than in Milan, the shoe capital of the world! She'll be styling and profiling in fashion!

A Little "Slow"

If your child has a developmental delay, take it easy! Rome wasn't built in a day, you know! Italians enjoy a pace slow enough to soak up and live life to the fullest. Looking back on your life, are you happier you learned those 20 extra vocabulary words or that you were just...HAPPY with life, relationships and experiences?

Advocate for Inclusion

ARD committee is ganging up on you? Get on the Vatican prayer list and then show up with the Pope in your corner. Related service providers making your kid cry? Call her godfather!

Great Pillars Among the Ruins and Olympic Greatness

The child's champions are the strong pillars still standing among the ruins of botched special education. They are the parents and the regular educators who, with their fortitude and commitment, could put ancient Olympians to shame.

You can make inclusion happen for your child. Your child should attend his neighborhood school and he can learn and play in regular education! With creativity and planning, you can find the parallelisms at your school!

With inspiration drawn from many (you know who you are) your pal,

The Italian Inclusion Fairy

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